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Building Community

Building Community: a third world case book, Ed. Bertha Turner, Building Community Books, London, 1988

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A Third World Case Book

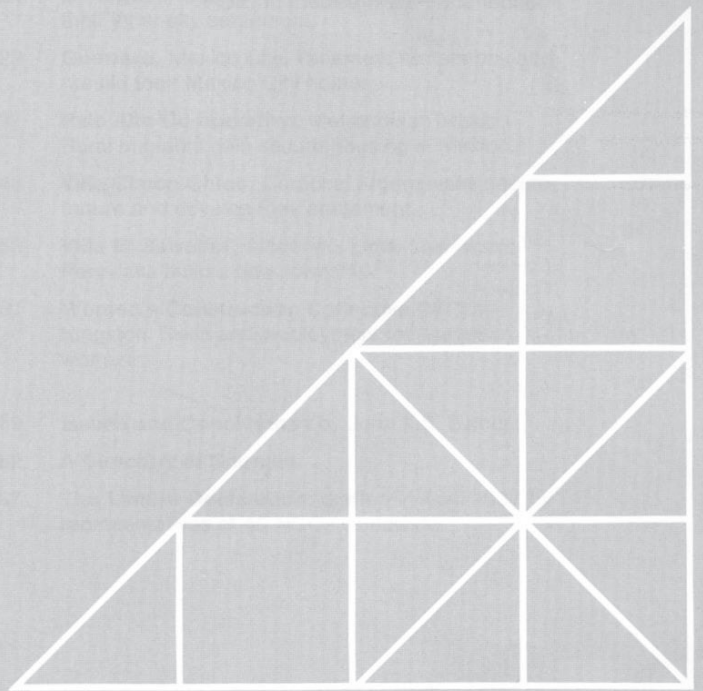
A summary of the Habitat International Coalition Non-Governmental Organization's Project for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, 1987, in association with Habitat Forum Berlin.

Edited by Bertha Turner

Foreword by Dom Helder Camara

Introduction and Conclusions
by John F.C. Turner

BCB/HFB





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Editor's Preface

This book describes major breakthroughs in housing, being made today by the poor of Third World countries. Living under governments which cannot afford to house them, and unable to afford market prices, they must build their own communities. Between half and three-quarters of all new homes in most Third World cities are built by low-income people. When they have access to available resources and are free to use them in their own ways, people and their community-based organizations can build up to five times more than their governments with the same funds, and to similar or better standards.

How can such poor people build so much with so little? What are the keys to success? What lessons do they teach for building fulfilling and sustainable societies in rich and poor countries alike?

Building Community addresses these questions with authority. Selected from over 300 cases, the 20 presented in this book have been edited from in-depth documentation by researchers working at the grass roots. They highlight the potentials as well as the problems and show what can and must be done in rich countries as well, where so many people are discovering and reclaiming their forgotten need and capacity for community building. This sea change of ideas is reflected in the community architecture and participatory planning movement in the United Kingdom, as well as in Europe, the United States of America and Canada.

The book shows how people can win their rights to resources for housing and the freedom to act for themselves; how governments can enable people by supporting local initiative; and how the essential changes in understanding can come about.

The turning point for this new understanding was the memorable Open Forum at Vancouver, Canada in 1976. Held in parallel with the United Nations Habitat Conference on Human Settlements that year, it was the first major event at which people of the non-governmental 'third sector' came together from different parts of the world to share their experience. Encouraged by its success, the organizer, Han van Putten, set up the Habitat International Council – HIC, the non-governmental organizations' (NGO) Committee on Human Settlements. Perseverance of a few members over the past decade ensured that, through HIC, NGOs worldwide established their presence and gained a voice at the United Nations'

Commission on Habitat. And, during the United Nations' International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, 1987 (IYSH '87), HIC finally became truly global, changing its name to Habitat International *Coalition*, the NGO *Alliance* on Human Settlements. Representatives of 57 NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) from 40 countries on all continents attended the HIC NGO Seminar in Limuru, Kenya, in March 1987, and formulated the Declaration included in this book. This historical document was confirmed at the subsequent NGO Global Forum in Nairobi in April and at Habitat Forum Berlin in June, which also saw the start of an action programme.

The project on which this book is based started back in 1983. The NGO Habitat Project was HIC's contribution to IYSH '87, with the aim of drawing worldwide attention to: **the underestimated contribution and underused potentials of NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and CBOs (community-based organizations) in home and neighbourhood building, improvement, management and maintenance by and for people, especially (by and for) those with low incomes and who are vulnerable to discrimination or disasters.**

During the Project's first year, a preliminary survey covering 341 cases of NGOs and CBOs in 75 countries on all continents was carried out, funded by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements. This was followed by in-depth documentation of 20 selected cases. It was decided at this stage to limit selection to Third World countries where homelessness is most acute and in order to ensure comparability. Although selection was further influenced by the availability of funds, sponsors and local researchers, the final selection demonstrates the immense variety of CBO and NGO approaches to home and neighbourhood building. The 20 cases in this book cover a wide range of geographic, social and economic conditions and span a spectrum of scales – from small village and neighbourhoods to relatively large townships. The projects selected also show widely different ways in which environmental improvements serve as vehicles for social and economic development.

The cases present many useful examples of ways and means for locally self-managed home and neighbourhood building, improvement and management. These are the useful precedents to be found in this book, as they are far more likely to be adaptable and transferable to other situations than whole programmes. Programmes are courses of action composed of selected options for the



component tasks – from initial group of community organizing to the management and maintenance of the improvements. The great variety of programmes illustrated by the cases highlights a key issue discussed in the Conclusions: the common but vain search for 'replicable programmes' to be administered by central authorities. Every successful programme is uniquely adapted to its place, time and people, as it must be if it is to match people's needs and priorities. This book is not intended as a catalogue of model programmes to be adopted by agencies and imposed on people, therefore. Rather, it is a source of 'tools for community building' – ideas and methods for use by local people and those working with them, to plan and carry out their own programmes.

Building Community will be of interest to everyone searching for alternatives to the unsustainable or unworkable systems dominated by the market or state. The cases point to new directions in housing that can lead to a sustainable future, directions that are paralleled by those emerging in the fields of food, health, learning and many other vital activities. The evidence in the book will be of equal importance to policy-makers and the professionals who serve them; to those who design and carry out local projects; and to students.

The **Foreword** by Dom Helder Camara, edited from his keynote speech at Habitat Forum Berlin in 1987, sheds light on the material, social and spiritual meaning of the struggles of people all over the world toward a decent life for themselves and their children. No one is better qualified to provide this global view. Dom Helder has won international acclaim as the outspoken Archbishop Emeritus of Olinda and Recife, Brazil and he has suffered personally for his courageous defence of the poor.

The **Introduction** is by John F.C. Turner, Co-ordinator of the HIC NGO Habitat Project and a pioneer since the 1950s in promoting community participation in both Third and First World countries. He provides insights into the viewpoint which shaped the Project's initial design and subsequent implementation.

The **cases** form the heart of *Building Community*. They are arranged alphabetically by continent and name, for easy reference. They are designed for use also as separate, individual reprints with the relevant credits on the title page of each one. They were prepared from the extensive documentation provided by people working in the field, according to the Steering Group's guidelines which specified a detailed schedule of data relevant to the

key issues, a monograph and audio-visual material. As funds become available, more of this research material will be edited and published under separate cover.

The **Issues and Conclusions** section is based on a paper which John F.C. Turner has evolved through a number of presentations and feedback at various meetings and workshops leading up to and during IYSH '87. It was first presented in preliminary form to the Development Advisory Group of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in October 1986. Progressively refined versions were contributed as discussion papers for meetings during 1987.

The **Directory of Sources** provides a selection of references of special interest to promoters and enablers, leaders and participants in community-based programmes. It is based on users' knowledge, rather than exhaustive research, and inevitably subject to the limitations of time and space.

The **Limuru Declaration**, drawn up in Kenya in April 1987, is reproduced as it echoes the spirit and content of this book. It was formulated by people from 40 countries in all world regions, representing 57 NGOs, 45 of which are based in Third World countries. Their joint Declaration reflects the wisdom of many experienced people, hard-won through long years of committed work, personal sacrifice and in some cases, personal suffering.

HIC conceived, planned and organized the overall project, obtained financial sponsorship for case studies by local researchers, and provided guidance. HIC members (AHAS, GRET, PGC-HS) and others listed in the credits section of each case, wrote the condensed, edited texts and provided the photos and information necessary for 16 of the 'wallnewspapers' designed and produced by the Habitat Forum Berlin team. These exhibition-format posters were displayed at the Berlin Forum and at many other IYSH '87 events. In addition to posters on 16 of the cases in this book, the set includes 6 on 'Changing the City'; these are especially appropriate for institutional use, complementing and complemented by this book. Texts for 4 additional case studies which did not appear as 'wallnewspapers' were especially written for this book by AHAS: El Agustino, Peru; Saarland Village 1, the Philippines; Yayasan Sosial Soegiyapranata, Indonesia; and the Village Reconstruction Organization Programme, India.

Bertha Turner, Co-director, AHAS, London January 1988



Foreword

This Foreword is an edited version of the keynote address given by Dom Helder Camara, Archbishop Emeritus of Olinda and Recife, Brazil, on the occasion of the Habitat Forum Berlin Conference, 'Learning from One Another', held in Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany, in June 1987. Translated from the Portuguese by the HFB staff, it is here edited by Bertha Turner and reproduced with the kind permission of Dom Helder.

Dear Brothers and Dear Sisters,
We come here from different parts of the world seeking to deepen our knowledge of one of the major problems of our time: homelessness.

We are aware that in our time, with its great technical and scientific progress, there still exist millions and millions of homeless people, or people with dwellings which do not deserve the name 'home'. (We must) examine the connection between homelessness and its consequences – the way in which this problem aggravates other major problems of our time.

The home plays a major role in human life. However, it is not enough just to have a house. Sometimes a man comes home, having lost his job, but lacking the courage to tell his family the bad news. He hopes to get a new job soon. It is terrible for the head of the family to come home bringing nothing! Sometimes, he (eventually has to) go far away from home to look for work.

Terrible, too, is the problem of lack of education, not being able to send the children to school, watching them grow up with no preparation for adult life. I remember when education seemed to be the big problem of the European world. After this came the question of food. Now it is housing.

Why is the world in a situation where more than two-thirds of humanity live in sub-human conditions more fit for animals than for humans?

My country, my dear Brazil, is almost the size of a continent and could contain Germany 30 times over. Yet it is unbelievable that this huge country remains in the hands of only eight per cent of its population.

A woman from a very rich, industrialized country (once) advised me: 'Tell your people to do as we have done: to use their heads, to work hard, to be honest and they will achieve what we have already achieved'. Her thinking contains three basic misunderstandings: first, that we are

unintelligent; second, that we do not have the will to work hard; and third, that we are dishonest. Honesty is there, especially among the poor. In our countries, the lack of honesty usually derives from a dictator. Intelligence is not lacking, nor are the people short of honesty and humility, so what is lacking?

The problem comes from the traditional injustice in external politics and trade. When there is exchange between our countries, the prices of both the raw materials and of the industrial products we need have always been and still are determined in the major decision-making centres of the world. It is clear that our raw materials have an ever-decreasing value, while industrial products an ever-increasing one.

'But you do not take into account the aid you receive'. Yes, we do. We are grateful. But we reach a point where aid, on its own, is not enough.

We must have the courage and confidence to say that there are signs of the times which are very positive. A first such sign is that today, within the more developed countries, there are ghettos, pockets of the Third World. Often there is a shortage of work, particularly for the young. Often, exiled people arrive because dictators dislike people who speak clearly and openly. And often so-called 'illegal immigrants' arrive.

Once (when I was) in the USA, they were celebrating their Founding Fathers, who left England because of religious persecution. At the same time, there was a project in another part of the country to expel 10,000 'illegal immigrants' who enter the country without proper documents. To a large audience, I said: 'My friends, I find this country celebrating its Founding Fathers. (Their deeds were) a noble act, born of love of liberty. But while we respect (them), when they came, they were met by the natives of this country. And the Founding Fathers were unable to show them any documents. So we should have the humility to acknowledge that many who settled in America are the descendants of illegal immigrants!'

Who are the masters of the world empire today? Once there was the Roman Empire. Portugal, Spain and Holland once held empires, too. When I was a child, Great Britain ruled the seas. After the First World War, it seemed there would be one great power: the United States of America. After the Second World War, there seemed to be two great powers: the United States of America and the Soviet Union.

When the First Industrial Revolution took place in



England, the steam-engine brought so much hope (that) everyone would have a comfortable life, a human life. However, these hopes soon encountered serious problems. Instead of serving everyone, the First Industrial Revolution benefitted only a small group of people.

Today we are watching the Third, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, with automation and robots. Once again, it seems that instead of being for all, it will benefit only a small group. Meanwhile, at the same time, even in industrialized countries, the lack of jobs continues.

It is terrible that our century, having already seen two World Wars, is now going through so-called 'conventional wars'. They differ from the two World Wars only in the fact that nuclear, chemical and biological weapons are not used. However, more people have been killed by conventional warfare since the end of the Second World War than were killed in the whole of that war.

Conventional wars induce countries who are unable to eliminate the hunger of their own people to buy weapons. The prime example of this is Brazil, with its great resources, which has not yet solved the problems of starvation and the deaths of many of its own people, and yet is today one of the major producers and sellers of conventional weapons.

The United Nations tells us that what is spent every year on the weapons race is more than enough to eliminate starvation and misery on earth. Nevertheless, the misery grows day by day.

The weapons race is now so mad that even military superpowers cannot afford the costs. They must now receive covert assistance from the big trans-national companies. (Many years ago) Eisenhower noted this tendency. As he was leaving the White House after his second term as President of the United States, he denounced the connection between economic and military power. Today, the masters of the world empire are the great multi-national corporations.

When trans-nationals come to our underdeveloped countries, they predict miracles. They will bring modern technology, strong and stable money, (and) generate many new jobs. The reality is quite different. There rapidly develops a natural connection between the small group of the rich in our countries and the trans-nationals. And the misery continues, this scandal which occurs on an international level and which is repeated in our countries: the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

(Yet technology and the multi-nationals could have a

positive role to play). We have to believe in the power of truth and justice. We have to respect the people and to believe in their becoming organized. As this Forum's title states, we are 'learning from one another'. More and more, we are learning the importance not only of working **for** the people, but **with** the people. When we work only **for** the people, we are the ones with the ideas, the projects, the social influence, the power, the money, and we go to help those poor people. But when we work **with** people, it is different. We trust the people, and it is easy to see that the people who do not know how to read or write because they had no schooling in their childhood, **do** know how to **think**, and that they understand their own problems better than any technician.

All these problems exploding and causing trouble even in the rich, industrialized countries bring our attention to the results of a research study headed by Willy Brandt and conducted by the United Nations. After visits to industrial countries, Third World countries and some areas of great deprivation and misery and discussions with many high-level technicians, a conclusion was reached: **that the rich, industrialized countries of the Northern hemisphere must use their abilities not only to give aid to the Third World, since aid alone does not resolve problems.**

(Instead, there must be) a genuine attempt to develop the countries of the South, the Third World. (If this were not done) the countries of the North would be unable to maintain their present position of wealth, tranquility and progress.

It is easy to see that the rich countries are in a dangerous position. Why try to suppress the internal debts? Governments can do so, but with dangerous consequences. We cannot ignore the fact that developed countries already have problems of unemployment. Rich countries with a high level of production: to whom will they sell? To other rich countries, which also have a high level of production? To the Third World, already burdened with debt? Today the debt problem is being studied by experts. They verify the point that our fantastic debts are, to a large extent, the result of forgetting the ethics of economic problems.

The problems are reaching the point of absurdity. What can we do about them? We must try to convince the rich, industrialized countries that, along with making use of human intelligence, they must also take into account God's plan. We persist in speaking about the First, Second, Third and Fourth Worlds. Yet God has not created



several different worlds, He has created only one, with one family.

How can we link and join together, no matter where we are? Through all religions there is now a movement toward mutual understanding, to discover what joins us together, rather than what separates us. Three months ago, in Córdoba, Spain, Jews, Christians and Muslims meeting together were all asking: 'How can we work together toward a more humane and fair world?' Different religions working together can create a world with less violence, less war for the children of today.

Recognizing the importance of this Forum, I hope that instead of being an end, it is a beginning. We already know of the very grave problem of homelessness: billions of God's children without shelter, human beings like us; of the problem of starvation, of unemployment, of debts. This Forum is (not only) about housing, but also about several different options toward development. A rich country calling attention to the need for re-examining this problem (of genuine development for the Third World), has a very powerful voice, and the world will listen. **Either we are saved together, or we will sink together.**